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Power line completed just in time to keep lights on

SEATTLE, Wash. – The Bonneville Power Administration reports that it strengthened a weak link in the Puget Sound Area’s electrical transmission grid just in time to meet record high demand during the arctic cold front now engulfing the region.

“After years of planning and a tight construction schedule this fall, the Kangley-Echo Lake line went into full operation on Dec. 31,” said Vickie VanZandt, BPA’s chief engineer. “We got it into service just in time to meet record-high loads driven by the current arctic cold front.”

VanZandt said growth in the Puget Sound area has increased demand on the transmission system and necessitated upgrades. The Kangley-Echo Lake line stretches nine miles through the Cedar River Watershed. It is a vital connection needed to ensure the reliable flow of power from generating plants east of the Cascades into Seattle and population centers to the north.

The Northwest Power Pool reported regionwide peak usage of more than 54,700 megawatts at 5 a.m. this morning. Forecasters expect record high consumption as population centers along the I-5 corridor and east of the Cascades absorb the full brunt of the arctic express.

“We don’t expect any trouble meeting loads from a generating standpoint,” VanZandt said. “But in weather like this, having a strong delivery system is equally important.”

The Kangley-Echo Lake line cost \$40 million to build. BPA used state-of-art environmental techniques to construct the line through the Cedar River Watershed, thereby protecting the source of Seattle’s drinking water.

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“We worked in close partnership with the city of Seattle to construct this line and will continue to work with them on future maintenance activities to ensure protection of the Cedar River Watershed,” said Lou Driessen, Kangley-Echo Lake project manager.

This represents BPA’s latest investment in reinforcing the power delivery system into the Puget Sound region. Over the past two years, BPA has spent a total of \$98 million, including this project, to strengthen the transmission grid serving Puget Sound.

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